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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001828

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DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: AEC CHAIRS DISCUSS NEXT CHAIRMAN/POSSIBLE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1803
[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1813

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez for reasons 1.4 b/d

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: At a November 20 urgent AEC working group chairperson meeting called by the UK Ambassador, Attendees (US, UK, Netherlands, Norway, Italy) discussed the draft UK paper on "Future Direction" of the AEC, a possible UK nominee for the AEC chairmanship, and the proposed Rome preparatory meeting for an international conference on the CPA. On the latter, the Italian Ambassador said Rome does not want to hold the conference unless both parties (SPLM and NCP) agree to it. The Italians don't want the NCP to perceive the meeting as an opportunity for the international community to pressure them over the current stalemate in Khartoum between themselves and the SPLM. Coordinators agreed to try to secure higher-level representation from capitals for the December AEC plenary (rather than outgoing AEC Chairman Vraalsen's idea of doing this on November 27). Post requests that the Department consider sending a senior representative to the mid-December Plenary (Office Director or higher) to demonstrate U.S. commitment to a strengthened AEC. End summary.

Intl Conference: Italians avoid confrontation with NCP

[1](#)2. (C) The Italian Ambassador briefed on the status of planning for the international conference on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). He said he spoke November 19 with his MFA Director General, and planning is proceeding for a preparatory conference in Rome o/a December [1](#)7. The aim of the prep conference will be to discuss the idea and timing of an international conference on the CPA, and what might be achieved and whether the time is right for such an event. Invitations are going out not/not to the IPF (IGAD Partners Forum) countries, but rather to the Sudan "Contact Group" countries. He suggested that the earliest feasible date for the actual international conference would be toward the end of January 2008, if not later. The Italian Ambassador said he had an initial positive reaction to the conference from the SPLM, but is now awaiting a formal response (the SPLM will almost certainly be eager to attend, especially if the current crisis continues). The Ambassador said he discussed the idea of the conference with the NCP before the current political crisis (with then FM Lam Akol and Minister of State Al-Samani al-Wasila), and subsequently had presented a brief concept paper on the conference to Presidential Adviser Mustafa Osman Ismail. Mustafa's

immediate reaction was that this might not be an opportune time for the conference because of the ongoing crisis between the NCP and the SPLM. CDA Fernandez observed that the NCP doesn't want the conference during the crisis because they expect it would be used to pressure the NCP to make concessions to the SPLM. The Italian Ambassador said because of that consideration, his government was not eager to hold the conference unless both parties agree to attend. (Comment: This condition would effectively give the NCP veto power over the international conference, which it will use since it seeks to avoid international meddling in CPA implementation. End comment)

Paper on AEC: Pass to other observers, then to parties

13. (C) The UK Ambassador asked for ideas on the UK-drafted white paper "Assessment and Evaluation Commission: Future Direction." The UK Ambassador noted the consensus on the paper, and said the next question is "how do we act on it?" The consensus among those present was that a "sanitized version" of the paper would be prepared to be passed to the other AEC international observers (Kenya, Ethiopia, AU, UN, Arab League, EC) to seek their thoughts on it without subjecting it to any sort of extensive revision. The paper would then be presented to the two parties as a "discussion document," to people like the NCP's Said al-Khatib and the SPLM's Kosti Manibe. CDA Fernandez said this version should be drafted so as not to cause difficulties "if it were to appear on the front page of a Sudanese newspaper." The aim of the document is to lay out to the NCP the need for a more independent and empowered AEC chairman. Of those present, only the Italian expressed misgivings, saying his MFA is not

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convinced that the best approach is to work the subject with the NCP before a new chairman has been appointed. The other Coordinators support the idea of trying to resolve the question of the Chairmanship's powers before a new chairman is named. CDA Fernandez noted that this approach would be performing a real service for the new chairman, so he/she would not have to perform this dirty work as the first order of business on arrival in Khartoum. The Italian Ambassador agreed to seek clearance from his government so that action on the paper can move forward.

New Chair: In absence of candidates, UK has a candidate

14. (C) The UK ambassador said her government has a possible candidate for the next chairman, and asked whether others were thinking of nominating anyone. The Netherlands ambassador said they had stopped looking when they heard the UK had a candidate, the Norwegian added that "my impression is that Oslo is happy that the UK is seeking someone." Thus it appears that the UK candidate will have a clear field for the nomination, assuming no local party has objections to the individual.

December Plenary should have high-level representation

5 (C) The final agenda item was the level of representation at the next AEC Plenary meeting, tentatively scheduled for either November 26 or 27. However, at a previous meeting AEC Chairman Tom Vraalsen requested that the working groups all be represented by higher-ranking officials from capitals (Ref A). The Italian Ambassador said his country would probably be represented by the MFA Director for Sub-Saharan Africa. After others indicated they probably would not have representation from capitals, it was recommended to suggest to the AEC Chairman that this high-level presence take place in a plenary during the first half of December. Moreover,

several reps noted that there was insufficient time before the late November date to permit higher-level representation. The meeting would have to be scheduled before December 15, Vraalsen's departure date.

¶6. (C) Other news to emerge from the meeting: Italy has not decided whether it will replace its AEC researcher, and the Germans apparently have not decided whether to replace the AEC legal adviser. Both incumbents are due to depart Khartoum about the same time as the Chairman. The Ethiopian observer at the AEC recently died, and is expected to be replaced at meetings by someone from the embassy for the time being.

¶7. (C) Comment: The discussion revealed a broad consensus among members that the post of AEC Chairman must be beefed up now with increased independence as the best hope of revitalizing the AEC, although the Italian wobbliness is worrying. The mid-December Plenary will be Chairman Vraalsen's swan song, after which it appears that the AEC may be leaderless for some time, due to the departure of the entire non-Sudanese staff as well as the Kenyan vice-chairman. Post suggests that Department give serious consideration to sending a senior level representative to the mid-December AEC plenary (Office Director or higher) as a means of boosting the institution and impressing on the NCP the importance that the U.S. places on an effective AEC. It may also allow for further discussion of the AEC paper with Sudanese officials.

FERNANDEZ